



# NEWSLETTER

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY**



## MESSAGE FROM SDDVA SECRETARY WHITLOCK

It's hard to believe that summer is half over and in a few short weeks, students will be heading back to school.

There are a wide range of education benefits available to veterans, servicemembers, and their dependents. These programs include apprenticeship, on-the-job training, college degree and certificate programs, flight training, and correspondence courses.

Each program provides different benefits to different groups of individuals and offers a specified number of "months" of benefits. It's worth noting that veterans can only use one VA education benefit for training at a time.

The VA's modernization of the GI Bill affords many new opportunities for veterans and their families.

There is a new feature that allows the transfer of GI Bill education benefits to veterans' dependents and family members, including stepchildren and wards in their care to receive unused benefits.

For the first time, foster children of servicemembers are eligible for GI Bill benefits transfer.

The Fry Scholarship criteria has changed to include spouses and children of service members — including reservists — who died in non-combat events.

Students will also now be required to "electronically verify" their enrollment status with the VA monthly.

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# SECRETARY WHITLOCK MESSAGE (CONTINUED)

Our team at the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs is ready to assist veterans and eligible family members with accessing the right education benefits and programs and update them on the new alternatives. Our experts can talk you through your options, help determine your eligibility, and give you the information you need to make the best choices for you and your family.

I encourage all veterans with remaining GI Bill benefits to give Shane Olivier a call (605-773-3648) or email him at: [shane.olivier@state.sd.us](mailto:shane.olivier@state.sd.us) if they have questions about college degree and certificate programs, flight training, and correspondence courses. Questions regarding apprenticeship and on-the-job training should be directed to Ryan Fowler (605-773-3565) or email him at [ryan.fowler@state.sd.us](mailto:ryan.fowler@state.sd.us).

For more information on the GI Bill visit <https://www.benefits.va.gov/benefits/>.

South Dakota is grateful to all veterans for their service and is committed to helping them achieve their educational goals.

Greg Whitlock, Secretary

South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs

## SDDVA ATTENDS WOLKOW'S HOMECOMING

SDDVA joined in the homecoming celebration for South Dakota's American Legion State Commander Gary Wolkow in De Smet last weekend. SDDVA Field Service Officer Brett Dickerson represented the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs. Congratulations Commander Wolkow, we look forward to working with you and your members.



# PURPLE HEART RECOGNITION DAY

At the request of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs, Gov. Kristi Noem has proclaimed Saturday, Aug. 7, 2021, as "Purple Heart Recognition Day," calling on all South Dakotans to honor those men and women who are recipients of the Purple Heart Medal.

The Purple Heart is the nation's oldest military honor, dating back to General George Washington and the American Revolution, and is awarded to those service men and women who have borne the battle, sacrificing life and limb.

"August 7th is also National Purple Heart Day, and is a day to honor those brave men and women who have earned the Purple Heart," said Greg Whitlock, Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs. "It unites our country in recognizing the sacrifices of those who have risked everything in serving our great nation."

The Governor encourages all South Dakotans to set aside time on August 7 to pay tribute to our heroes who have been honored with the Purple Heart. "It is important for all Americans to learn the history of this important military award and the sacrifices made by the recipients," said Gov. Noem.

"Our military remains as strong as it has ever been. America's veterans have been defined by the virtues of selfless service, sacrifice and devotion to duty," said Whitlock. "These men and women, who serve and have served, are the flesh and blood of American exceptionalism."



# VA ANNOUNCES NEW OPTIONS TO HELP VETERANS AVOID FORECLOSURE

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs is offering a new COVID-19 Refund Modification option to assist Veterans who require a significant reduction in their monthly mortgage payments because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In some cases, veterans can receive a 20% payment reduction — in others, the reduction can be even larger.

This new option is part of the of [Biden-Harris administration's expanded, government-wide effort](#) to help homeowners retain their homes as they weather the economic challenges resulting from the ongoing pandemic.

Under the COVID-19 Refund Modification, VA can purchase a veteran's past due payments and amounts of unpaid principal, depending on how much assistance is necessary, subject to certain limits. Loan servicers also modify the loan. These efforts help ensure that the veteran can afford future mortgage payments.

"The COVID-19 Refund Modification provides veterans a lasting and affordable solution to keeping their homes and avoiding foreclosure," said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. "As our country recovers and rebuilds from the economic devastation brought on by the pandemic, the VA and the Biden-Harris administration continue to make every effort to help veterans keep a roof over their head as they get back on their feet."

Like with the VA's [COVID-19 partial claim option](#), the Veteran's deferred indebtedness from a COVID-19 Refund Modification will be established as a junior lien. The junior lien will not accrue interest; will not require monthly payments; and will only become due when the property is sold, the guaranteed loan is paid off, or the guaranteed loan is refinanced.

Veterans can get a COVID-related forbearance through Sept. 30, 2021.

To learn more about this new option visit [VA's Home Loan Program](#) or call 877-827-3702.





# **VA MANDATES COVID-19 VACCINES AMONG ITS MEDICAL EMPLOYEES INCLUDING VHA FACILITIES STAFF**

On July 26 the United States Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Denis McDonough announced he will make COVID-19 vaccines mandatory for Title 38 VA health care personnel — including physicians, dentists, podiatrists, optometrists, registered nurses, physician assistants, expanded-function dental auxiliaries and chiropractors — who work in Veterans Health Administration facilities, visit VHA facilities or provide direct care to those VA serves.

The VA is taking this necessary step to keep the veterans it serves safe. Each employee will have eight weeks to be fully vaccinated.

“We’re mandating vaccines for Title 38 employees because it’s the best way to keep veterans safe, especially as the Delta variant spreads across the country,” McDonough said. “Whenever a veteran or VA employee sets foot in a VA facility, they deserve to know that we have done everything in our power to protect them from COVID-19. With this mandate, we can once again make — and keep — that fundamental promise.”

The Department’s decision is supported by numerous medical organizations including the American Hospital Association, America’s Essential Hospitals and a Multisociety group of the leading Infectious Disease Societies. The American Medical Association, American Nurses Association, American College of Physicians, American Academy of Pediatrics, Association of American Medical Colleges, and National Association for Home Care and Hospice also [endorsed mandating COVID-19 vaccination for health care workers](#).

In recent weeks, the VA has lost four employees to COVID-19 — all of whom were unvaccinated. At least three of those employees died because of the increasingly prevalent Delta variant. There has also been an outbreak among unvaccinated employees and trainees at a VA Law Enforcement Training Center, the third such outbreak during the pandemic.

All VA employees are eligible to be vaccinated at no personal expense at any of the facilities. Employees will also receive four hours of paid administrative leave after demonstrating they have been vaccinated. Information in [these FAQs](#) or [clinician and Veteran videos](#) has details about the vaccine, its safety and effectiveness.

The safety and wellbeing of our veterans and personnel is paramount.



## VETERANS STAND DOWN

**Friday Sept. 24, 2021**

**9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**

**SD Military Heritage Alliance**

**1600 W. Russell St.**

**Sioux Falls, SD**

### TRANSPORTATION AVAILABLE

Shuttle service will be every 1/2 hour starting at  
8:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. from the following locations:

- Vet Center on 49<sup>th</sup> and Carnegie
- Volunteers of America (VOA) Veteran Outreach Ctr. @ 14th & Cliff
- Sioux Falls VA Health Care System on 22<sup>nd</sup> and Western
- Bishop Dudley Hospitality House
- Union Gospel Mission

On-the-spot help including bicycle repair, clothing,  
community housing referral, medical & dental treatment,  
readjustment counseling, Women Veteran services and much more!  
Brunch will be served from 10:00 a.m. to 11:45 p.m.

For more information call: (605)-330-4552





**17th ANNUAL CHARITY  
POKER RUN**

**2021 727th DAY**

**SEPTEMBER 04, 2021**

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**QUESTIONS**  
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(605)690-1961

MSG (RETIRED) ERIC KINSLOW  
(605)415-1759

[f FACEBOOK.COM/727DAYPOKERRUN](https://www.facebook.com/727DAYPOKERRUN)

 <p><b>Brookings Veterans of Foreign Wars</b> George Dokken Post #2118 520 Main Avenue Brookings, SD</p> <p>• Party Rental • • BINGO •</p> <p>Proudly supporting the 727th and DAV!</p>	 <p><b>ALLEGRA</b></p> <p>605.697.5170   <a href="mailto:orders@allegrabrookings.com">orders@allegrabrookings.com</a> 301 Main Avenue   Brookings, SD 57006 <a href="http://www.allegrabrookings.com">www.allegrabrookings.com</a></p>	 <p><b>AMERICAN TRUST INSURANCE</b> Reliable. Responsive. Reputable.</p> <p><a href="http://www.ATINSURE.com">www.ATINSURE.com</a> 100 Main Avenue • PO Box 420 • Brookings, SD 605-692-6223</p>	 <p><b>VFW</b> Ron Westby Post #2638</p> <p>256-6771 510 S. Washington Ave., Modison, SD 57042 You're only a stranger once.</p>
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# UPCOMING EVENTS

- Jul 31—American Legion State Auxiliary President Stier Homecoming—Phoenix Center (Main Street)—Onida—1:30 pm (CT)
- Aug 7—Purple Heart Day
- Aug 14—Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—PVT Richard Bertram—Colome American Legion Post (208 Main Street)—Colome—2:00 pm (CT)
- Aug 16-18—SDDVA Annual Benefits School—Ramkota Hotel—Pierre
- Aug 18—VASFHCS Show and Shine—Sioux Falls—(Enter off 26th Street)—5:30 pm—8:00 pm (CT)
- Aug 21—Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—PFC Robert Rand—Parker Community Building (299 N. Main)—Parker—2:00 pm (CT)
- Aug 23—Midwest Honor Flight Fundraiser at Barrel House (4701 E. 54th Street)—Sioux Falls
- Aug 23—Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—CPT Charles Lane—American Legion Post 183 (330 W. Yankton Street)—Tabor—2:00 pm (CT)
- Aug 30—Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—PVT Bruce Ruby—Scherr Howe Event Center (212 Main Street)—Mobridge—10:30 am (CT)
- Sep 2-6—South Dakota State Fair—Huron
- Sep 2—Veterans Day at the SD State Fair
- Sep 2—Salute to Veterans Program at the SD State Fair—Freedom Stage—10:30 am (CT)
- Sep 4—727th/DAV Annual Poker Run—Swiftel Center (824 32nd Avenue)—Brookings
- Sep 10—VABHHCS Veterans Stand Down—The Monument's Rushmore (Halls C & D)—444 Mt. Rushmore Road—Rapid City—1:00 pm—5:00 pm (MT)
- Sep 10—VABHHCS We Remember 9/11 20th Commemoration—The Monument's Rushmore (Halls C & D)—444 Mt. Rushmore Road—Rapid City—5:00 pm (MT)
- Sep 10—VABHHCS Veterans Recovery Concert—The Monument's Rushmore (Halls C & D)—444 Mt. Rushmore Road—Rapid City—6:30 pm (MT)
- Sep 11—Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—1LT Herbert Lyman and T/SGT James Lyman—Thunder Hawk American Legion Post—Thunder Hawk—10:00 am (MT)
- Sep 11—Patriot Day Celebration—420 Villa Drive—Box Elder—2:30 pm (MT)
- Sep 18—Midwest Honor Flight—Mission 7
- Sep 18—Midwest Honor Flight Welcome Home Ceremony—Sioux Falls Convention Center Arena—9:15 pm (CT)  
Doors Open at 7:30 pm (CT)
- Sep 22-23—DAV and Auxiliary 14th District Fall Conference—DAV Headquarters—1519 W. 51st Street—Sioux Falls
- Sep 24—Veterans Stand Down—SD Military Heritage Alliance (1600 W. Russell Street)—Sioux Falls—9:00 am—noon (CT)
- Sep 30—Folds of Honor Legacy Golf Tournament—Red Rock Golf Course—Rapid City





## UPCOMING EVENTS (CONTINUED)

Oct 9— Midwest Honor Flight—Mission 8

Oct 9—Midwest Honor Flight Welcome Home Ceremony—Sioux Falls Convention Center Arena—8:45 pm (CT)  
Doors Open at 7:00 pm (CT)

Oct 20—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting—SD Military Heritage Alliance Building (1600 W. Russell)—  
Sioux Falls—9:00 am (CT)

Oct 23—Midwest Honor Flight Hangar Dance at the South Dakota Military Heritage Alliance (1600 W. Russell  
Street)—Sioux Falls

Nov 13—Northern Hills Veterans Appreciation Fair—Sturgis Community Center (1401 Lazelle Street)—12:00—  
3:00 pm (MT)

Dec 14—Governor's Budget Address

Dec 18—Wreaths Across America—South Dakota Veterans Cemetery—Sioux Falls—11:00 am (CT)

2022

Jan 11—Governor's State of the State Address

Jun 12—Midwest Honor Flight Annual Honor Ride

Jul 18-23—National Veterans Golden Age Games—Sioux Falls



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South Dakota Department of the Military <https://military.sd.gov/>

South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs <https://vetaffairs.sd.gov>

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